DYNAUDIO

Special Forty
User manual

Meet the Special Forty

They say "life begins at 40". Take a peek inside Dynaudio Labs and you'll see that's absolutely true.

Say hello to the next evolution of passive stereo speakers.

"What are you going to do for your 40th birthday?", everyone asked. We thought about it for a bit and decided that since we aren't big on huge decorated cakes and candles (although we are partial to a tasty fastelavnsbolle), we'd celebrate a little differently.

With a new speaker.

And yes, we know you're the ones supposed to be giving us gifts – but we just couldn't help ourselves.

Happy birthday to us! Meet the Special Forty.

Laurels aren't for resting on

We still surprise ourselves. Some people might be content to sit back and be complacent about their successes after 40 years of constant innovation. We aren't. In fact, we only get hungrier for new techniques and technologies.

That's why we developed the Special Forty. We wanted to revisit those innovations and see what we'd do differently this time.

What you won't find here is anything revolutionary (check out our active speaker range for that – you'll be amazed). Instead, you'll discover a look at our past – along with some special sneak-previews of the future.

The Special Forty is classic Dynaudio: all the craftsmanship, attention to detail and total love of authentic sound you've come to expect. It's the connoisseur's choice – a simple pair of passive hi-fi speakers. But it isn't about looking back, misty-eyed, at past glories and leaving it at that. It's about using those glories as a platform from which to launch our next set of breakthroughs.

Greatest hits… reimagined

We do compact speakers really well. We always have. So, as a nod back to classics including the Special One, the Special Twenty-Five, the Crafft and the Contour 1.3SE, we kept the Special Forty pure – if incredibly advanced.

Of course, it wouldn't be an anniversary speaker if it didn't include some of our greatest hits. But we haven't just got the old band back together to trot out the same old stuff, unchanged. We've remixed, remastered and rearranged things to bring those old favourites into 2017 – and beyond.

That's why it has one of our classic first-order crossover designs, incorporating our unique Phase Alignment and Impedance Alignment technologies. The crossover expertly marshals the input signal between the woofer and the tweeter – so each driver gets only the frequencies it's supposed to, and can perform at its very best. Its specially selected components handle the impedance optimisation and, because both drivers have extended frequency ranges for even better overlap and integration, that performance borders on the mesmerising.

The song remains the same

The Special Forty uses our proprietary MSP (Magnesium Silicate Polymer) material for its main driver. MSP delivers precisely the right combination of rigidity, damping and stability for the most faithful sound reproduction. And, unlike other cone materials, it doesn't change over time – so your Special Forty speakers will still be singing just as sweetly come our next anniversary.

The cone itself uses a painstakingly developed symmetrical excursion for even better midrange performance.

Behind it sits a new Nomex spider – the 'suspension' for the voice-coil. It enables for even more symmetry in the driver's excursion – and makes it possible not only to pick out individual parts in a piece of music, but even individual instruments in an orchestra. (So now, finally, the Third Violin section can have its day in the sun.) And, like all our other MSP cones, it's a one-piece design (you can tell by the special balance ribs around the central dust-cap). This gives it an incredibly solid connection to the voice-coil, as well as stabilising its form – which is crucial when you decide to turn it up to 11.

It all sits in our special AirFlow Basket – the bit that holds the whole driver motor securely in place in the cabinet. Its development was one of those 'Eureka!' moments our engineers seem to get a few times a week in Dynaudio Labs (you can often hear them cheering from across the road in our factory). We asked them to reduce internal reflections and increase air movement without compromising the basket's stiffness or stability, and this genius design is what they came up with.

Airflow is king

The new Esotar Forty tweeter takes air-movement to another level. It moves the air in typically sweet fashion in front of the DSR (Dynaudio Secret Recipe) precision-coated soft-dome, of course, but there's a lot of engineering going on behind it as well.

Take the new pressure conduit. It's a shaped vent in the back of the magnet system that allows more space in the rear chamber. That space lets us pack in more damping material and reduces back-pressure, while the shape itself optimises airflow coming backwards from the rear of the dome.

Then there's the outlet; the aero-coupled pressure-release system. It sits underneath the voice-coil and reduces unwanted pressure build-up that could affect its movement. Stopping those pockets of air from forming reduces resonance – and less resonance equals even greater potential for detail.

Flux optimisation and beam control

We love playing with the laws of physics. Physics wins in the end, of course (usually), but we almost always manage to bend it to our will along the way. Just like we have with our magnet systems.

The magnet turns electrical energy that flows from your amplifier into the voice-coil, into the physical back-and-forth movement of the driver diaphragm. These movements are very small and very fast (especially in the tweeter), so they need a lot of finesse if you want to hear all that luscious detail and emotion in your music.

Behind the woofer

In the woofer, we've achieved that finesse in two ways: by placing the magnet inside the voice-coil, and by playing with magnetic energy itself.

Other manufacturers typically put it around the outside edge, leaving the voice-coil hollow. Putting the magnet inside keeps the magnetic energy (or flux) in the optimum position for getting itself wrapped around the voice-coil – where it should be. That means we can use more of its power for a given weight. It also reduces internal reflections because there's less material for sound to bounce off inside the driver.

Second, we use a hybrid magnet for even greater control over the flux and voice-coil movement. An incredibly powerful neodymium rare-earth magnet provides the muscle and flings flux around with abandon, while a ferrite magnet tempers that enthusiasm by gently moving the flux back to exactly where it's needed most. The result? Symmetrical excursion, a reduction in second-harmonics, and an even more accurate, authentic sound.

Box clever

And then there's the finish. Whichever veneer you've gone for – the Grey Birch or the Red Birch, our designers have given you a treat. We've always pushed the boat out on our special anniversary speakers – from the luscious bird's-eye maple of the Contour 1.3 SE to the Special Twenty-Five's stunning burled birch and the Sapphire's amazing Mocca, Bordeaux and Ivory veneers. The Special Forty takes that to a new level. We pushed

our team to come up with something different to the kind of thing we've done in the past, and they took that to heart. That's why they're raw; visceral; striking. We wanted the Special Forty to look as authentic and honest as the music they're playing sounds.

Happy birthday to us! Enjoy the party (help yourself to fastelavnsboller).

Safety instructions

High sound pressure levels

Listening to high sound pressure levels over a longer period of time may harm your hearing.

To avoid auditory effect do not listen to high sound levels over a longer period of time.

About this guide Used expressions and symbols

In this operating manual following signs and symbols are used:

The exclamation point within an equilateral triangle is intended to alert the user to the presence of important operating and maintenance (servicing) instructions in the literature accompanying the product.

CAUTION

Indicates (in combination with a safety sign) a potentially hazardous situation which, if not avoided, could result in minor or moderate injury or damage to equipment.

1. Multiple steps that should be performed consecutively are numbered.
2. Please follow these instructions carefully.

Note

Additional information is provided, which is important to fully understand the loudspeaker and how to operate it.

Made in Denmark

A company like Dynaudio doesn't emerge fully-formed. It takes a clear philosophy – an enduring one – to guide it.

Back in 1977 Dynaudio's founder, Wilfried Ehrenholz, decided that the off-the-shelf speakers he'd been listening to weren't telling the whole truth. Dynaudio started out by putting drivers made by other companies into tweaked off-the-shelf cabinets, with crossovers made in-house. But they still weren't Right: it wasn't all made in-house. And we all know there's only one way to get something Right if no one else can do it…

It's all in the detail

Our high-end Esotar soft-dome tweeters are precision-coated for the highest quality treble performance.

"Whatever I do, I want to make a perfect thing. I talked to a lot of other engineers at the time, and I could see how limited their understanding of speaker technology was," says Wilfried. "So we did it ourselves." That obsession with The Truth set us on the path to Rightness.

We began in Skanderborg, Denmark. It's a small town by a lake; you'd like it, it's lovely.

And because there isn't an awful lot to do in Skanderborg, we turned our attention to making the most honest speakers possible. That meant total transparency: simply reproducing the music that was fed to them from the original performance.

The drivers available at the time just weren't good enough, so we built our own – but it wasn't just a test-the-water-and-dive-in job. We did our homework.

Dynaudio was always striving to reach the next level; a level its established competitors – some of whom were leviathans of the hi-fi industry – either couldn't get to, or hadn't even realised existed.

Our goal? To stop picking apart frequencies and just… sit. Listen. Enjoy.

"If a musician expresses what's in the music, when you listen to it, you aren't analysing it. It's just emotion," Wilfried says.

That philosophy – that pursuit of truth through emotion – permeates the entire company. There's always another level to hit. VP of Innovation Mark Thorup and Wilfried have been working side by side for decades – and they still agree on one thing: they're living their passion and making a business of it. "We're not doing it because we must. We're doing it because we can," says Mark.

"I'm very proud that we kept all our principles from the beginning; we didn't have to change anything. Most concepts we started are still valid after 40 years, and I think this is very impressive," Wilfried says.

"When I think back, I can't understand how I have been so brave! When we started, I was only 22 years old, no experience, no background, just finished my studies – but I never had any doubt that we would be successful. We never did anything just for the money. Ever. I thought we might build a company with 30, 40 people or so, but it went better than I thought!"

It's always been this way, ever since we started in one building in 1977, with a handful of employees. Now we have nearly 300… and they're all fussy. Just as it should be. Our people are the key to everything we do: they know exactly how to create quality. They test, and listen, and test, and refine, and listen. They're experts. It means if something isn't right, we can fix it – not just change something else further down the line and hope it solves the problem. We do it at the beginning.

Magnets and wires and robots

The driver sits at the heart of it all. We develop and manufacture them all ourselves – right down to magnetising

the magnets and engineering the voice-coils. Winding is an automated process these days (although even the robots we built can't escape the eagle eyes or ears of our quality-control people), but at one point even this was done by expert pairs of hands.

We use aluminium wire instead of conventional copper. It's lighter, which lets us double the coil diameter for any given weight. It also lets us use longer windings – which gives the driver longer excursion and better heat dissipation. (And that, in English, means we have tighter control over the sound.)

We develop our cones in house too, from our own version of a material called MSP. The whole thing is made in one piece – including the dust-cap – so there's no need for glue. (Although our engineers can tell the difference between different glues just by listening; never let it be said we don't know how to have a good time.)

Building the motors

You might notice our cones are shallower than those of our competitors. That isn't an accident, and it isn't just because we want to be different. It's to improve our speakers' off-axis performance – so the sound you get off to the side is far closer to what you hear out in front… perfect if you have friends over and don't want to give up the good seat.

There are other, less obvious details, too. Some you won't even see – like the spider. That's the springy piece of material that acts as the voice-coil's suspension. It's springy because it needs to control how much the voice-coil moves back and forth, and how much air there is behind the speaker cone. We've improved its symmetry by taking measurements and performing simulations – which improves the sound you hear.

It all sits in the basket. That's the physical housing for the whole driver motor. The car around its engine (or, if you prefer, the Fort Knox around that precious gold). It's just as important – so even though you can't see it, we've spent just as much time refining its design as we have every other part of our speakers. Ventilation is crucial: it's made to reduce turbulence behind the driver, which, again, helps them sound their best.

High-quality high frequency

Then there's our signature soft-dome tweeters. We don't let anyone else near them (apart from our talented team, of course). We've been refining our tweeter designs ever since we started out: geometry, shape, materials, stiffness… even the coating. We use the right amount, in the right places, at the right density, to control roll-off and keep a steady hand on the treble response. Because they aren't made of metal, they have a flatter, more linear frequency response – and, we think, better sound.

But, in the end, it all comes down to our people. They're fanatical about what they do (you really should check out one of our glue-listening sessions; they're enlightening), and they're incredibly proud of what they produce.

And, with our brand-new R&D facility that opened at the end of 2016, they're even more excited about what new stuff they can come up with next…

Connecting

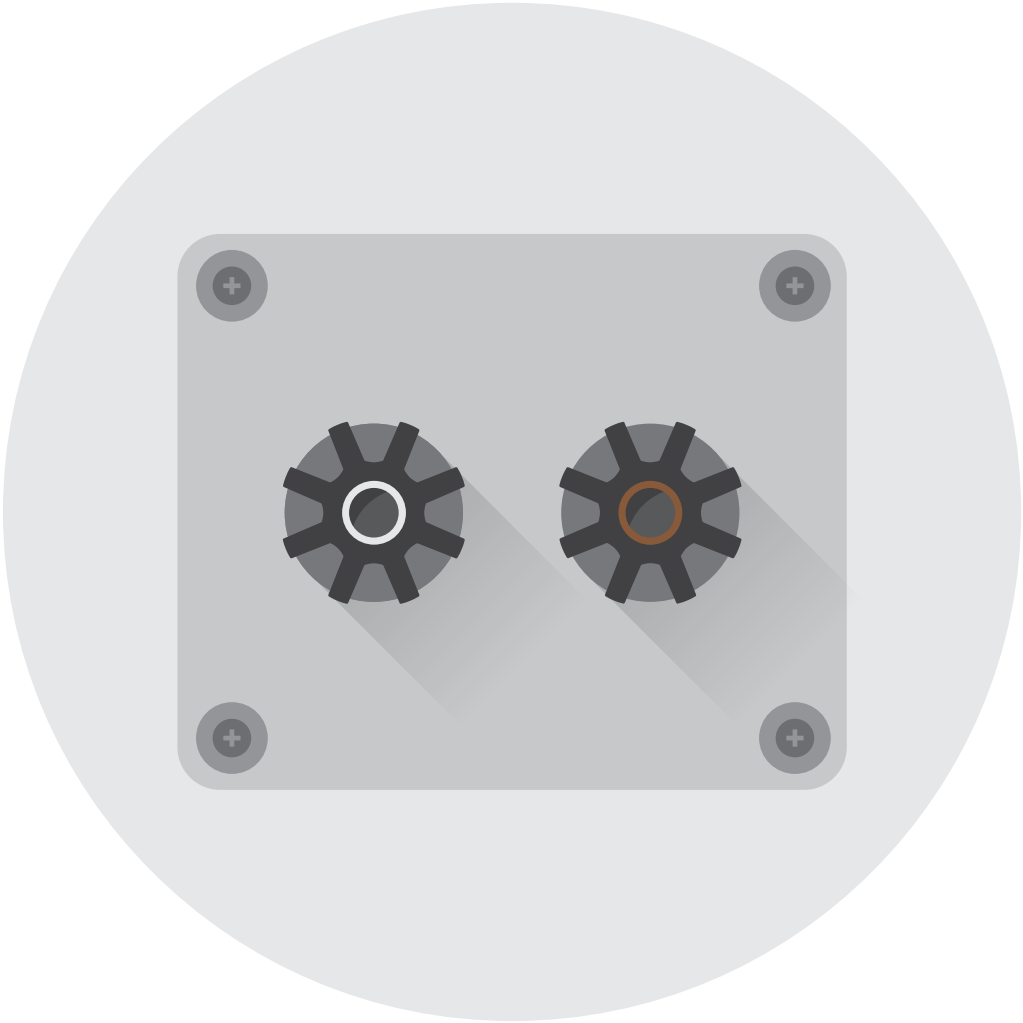

Figure 1: Binding posts at rear of cabinet (example).

Connect a two-pole (+/-) loudspeaker cable to the binding posts, located at rear of the cabinet (see Figure 1). The high quality, gold plated binding posts can accommodate different connection systems:

4.0 mm banana plugs

The pins can be put directly into the binding post without any tightening necessary.

Cable spades

Un-tighten the binding posts, insert the spade into the opening, and secure the spade by tightening the posts.

Bare wires

Un-tighten the binding posts and place the cable into the binding posts. Tighten the posts.

Note

- With every connection system, ensure that the contact is tight and has a proper contact area.

- Connectors with similar gold plating as binding posts will typically offer the best results and remain corrosion-free.
- Please ensure that the positive and negative cables do not make contact with each other. Tighten the posts, and check the contact after a few days to make sure that it hasn't loosened.

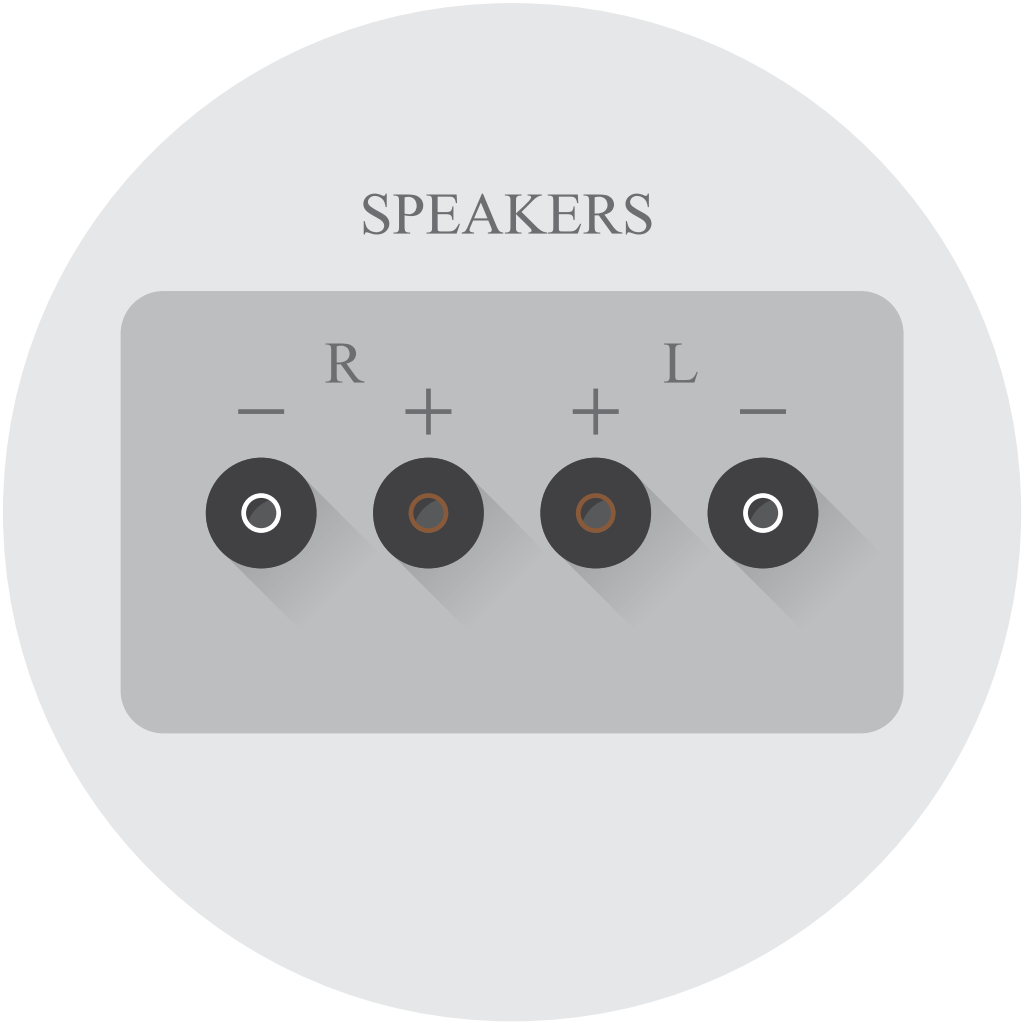

Figure 2: Amplifier loudspeaker outputs (example).

Connect the other cable ends to the loudspeaker outputs of your switched off power amp (see Figure 2).

Note

Please make sure that the red marked post of the speaker is connected to the red marked output of the amp, and the white or black marked post to the white or black marked output accordingly.

Bi-wiring/bi-amping

Dynaudio loudspeakers feature a carefully fine-tuned cross-over, optimised using selected parts and an advanced circuitry to achieve a truly balanced and smooth frequency response. Therefore, dividing the frequency sections through bi-wiring or bi-amping is neither beneficial nor optional.

Choice of loudspeaker cable

The loudspeaker cable can have an impact on sound quality. In general, quality cable products will yield a quality result.

Dynaudio loudspeakers are designed to be very neutral and thus are not extremely suited to any particular type of cable. The choice of cable is as much a factor of matching the cable to the entire audio system. Please consult your Dynaudio dealer for information about compatible loudspeaker cables that will suit both your electronics and your Dynaudio loudspeakers.

Connecting surround speakers

When connecting a two-channel stereo system, only the right and left channels are connected to the amplifier.

In a surround set-up, centre, side or rear loudspeakers as well as a subwoofer are typically connected to provide for a multi-channel listening experience. Please refer to the amplifier's owner manual for particular connection instructions and see the "Multichannel loudspeaker setup" section for further help.

Positioning

Dynaudio loudspeakers consist of classic bass reflex loudspeaker designs with no unusual or extraordinary positioning demands. Every room will still have its own particular sound characteristics. Any room is also shaped and decorated uniquely, and therefore remains independent regarding options for positioning loudspeakers.

The following steps are general suggestions that will make the correct positioning easier to achieve.

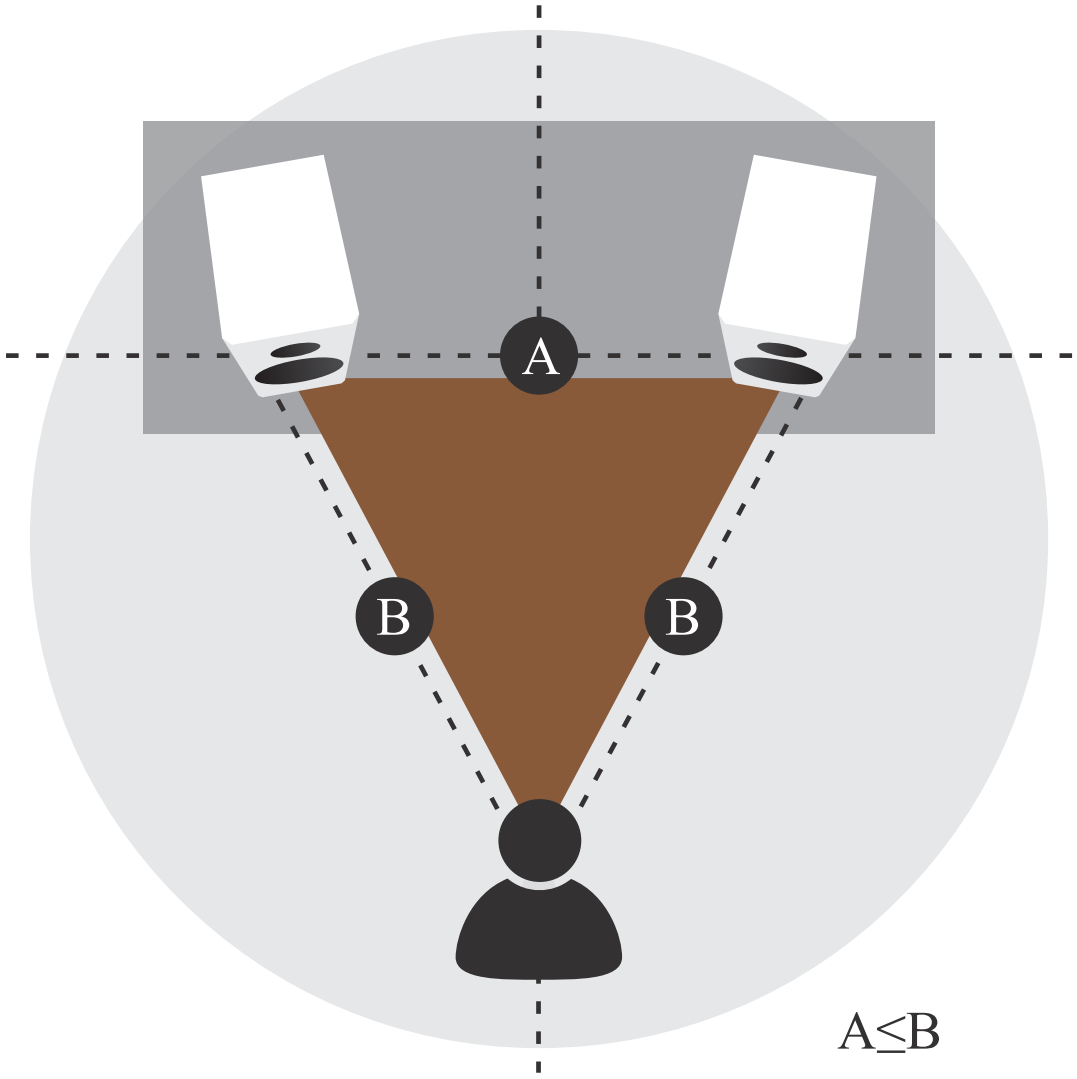

Figure 3: Positioning the loudspeakers.

General recommendations

The following explanations refer to Figure 3.

- The distance between each loudspeaker and your listening position should be the same (B). Try to achieve an isosceles triangle.
- The distance between the loudspeakers should be the same or better slightly less than the distance between each loudspeakers and your listening position (A, B).

- The closer the listening position is in relation to the loudspeakers, the closer the speakers can be positioned to each other.
- As a starting point, it is recommended that the speakers be about 2 meters apart from each other for the best results (A).
- If the speakers are positioned too close to each other, the stereo image will not seem realistic; if that distance is too wide, the image may leave an acoustic hole in the middle.
- Paying attention to the image during listening tests will help dictate optimum placement during experimentation and set-up.

Excessive brightness

CAUTION

Direct sunlight or excessive brightness can affect the colour of any natural wood veneer (the structural integrity of the cabinet will not be affected).

To maintain the aesthetic quality of the loudspeakers for the long term, placing such in very warm, very cold, or very humid environments should be avoided.

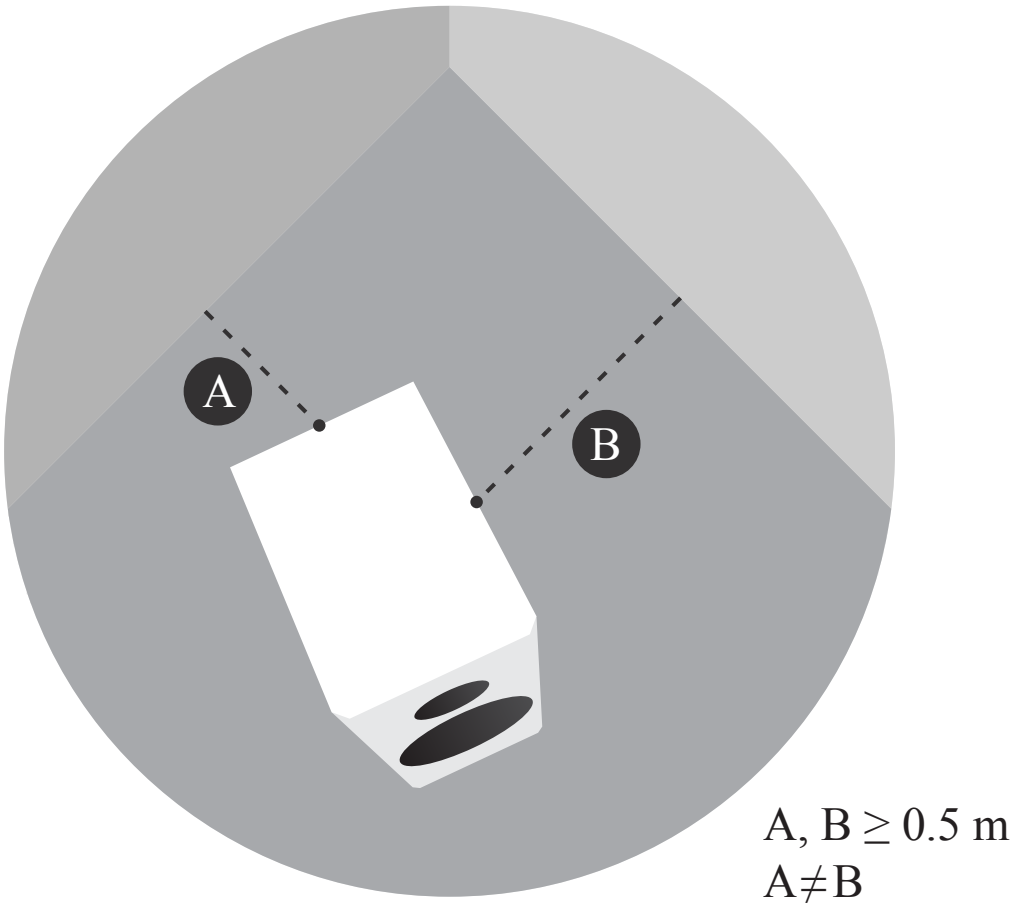

Figure 4: Distance to walls.

Distance to back and side walls

Every loudspeaker not only disperses sound energy directly into the room, but also to the side and even backwards. As a result, time-delayed reflections occur and add to the original music signal. Thus, when loudspeakers are positioned too close to walls, the sound quality can be restricted.

Dynaudio loudspeakers were developed to be placed free-standing, and therefore they reach their optimum performance when positioned as clear of any walls as possible.

To reduce possible influences from the back and sidewalls, the distance to these boundaries should ideally not be less than 0.5 meter (see Figure 4).

Adapting the bass reflex port

To minimise low frequency reflections, which will be heard as a thickening of the sound, the loudspeaker models can be adapted to the room's acoustic character by using foam plugs in the bass reflex port. This will essentially attenuate the room-induced boost in the low frequency range by dampening the deep frequencies, yielding a more clear and tight sound when the loudspeaker is positioned near rear walls.

Fully insert the foam port plugs packed with your loudspeaker into the bass reflex port, to attenuate the bass output (if required).

If the attenuation of the bass volume is too high (bass level too low) remove the inner part of the foam plug. Then

fully insert the foam ring in the bass reflex port. Make sure the ring is formed in a concentric circular shape within the port to prevent reduced and turbulent airflow.

Floor-standing loudspeaker set-up

The floor-standing models feature a special base construction, which offers both an ideal performance and mechanical basis. Integrated into the base plinth are four individual spike assemblies. These stabilise the cabinet on an extremely small contact area, and therefore prevent any wobbling while offering optimal resonance control. The individually adjustable spikes allow levelling of the cabinet on uneven floors.

Compact loudspeaker set-up

The compact models are designed to offer exceptional performance while taking up minimal space. The mini-monitors will realise their optimum performance when used in conjunction with a dedicated stand (such as the Dynaudio Stands) to position them at the proper height while absorbing any resonance.

Due to its dimensions, you can also place the loudspeaker on a ledge or shelf or on top of furniture. But to avoid the possibility of any negative influence on sound quality, one should take care to utilise a stable surface offering a wide enough space in front of the loudspeakers as to not limit the sound quality and performance. In such applications or if placing the speakers in enclosed audio/video furniture, the bass reflex port can usually be left unplugged as long as there is minimal clearance to the boundaries at the top and rear of the loudspeaker cabinet.

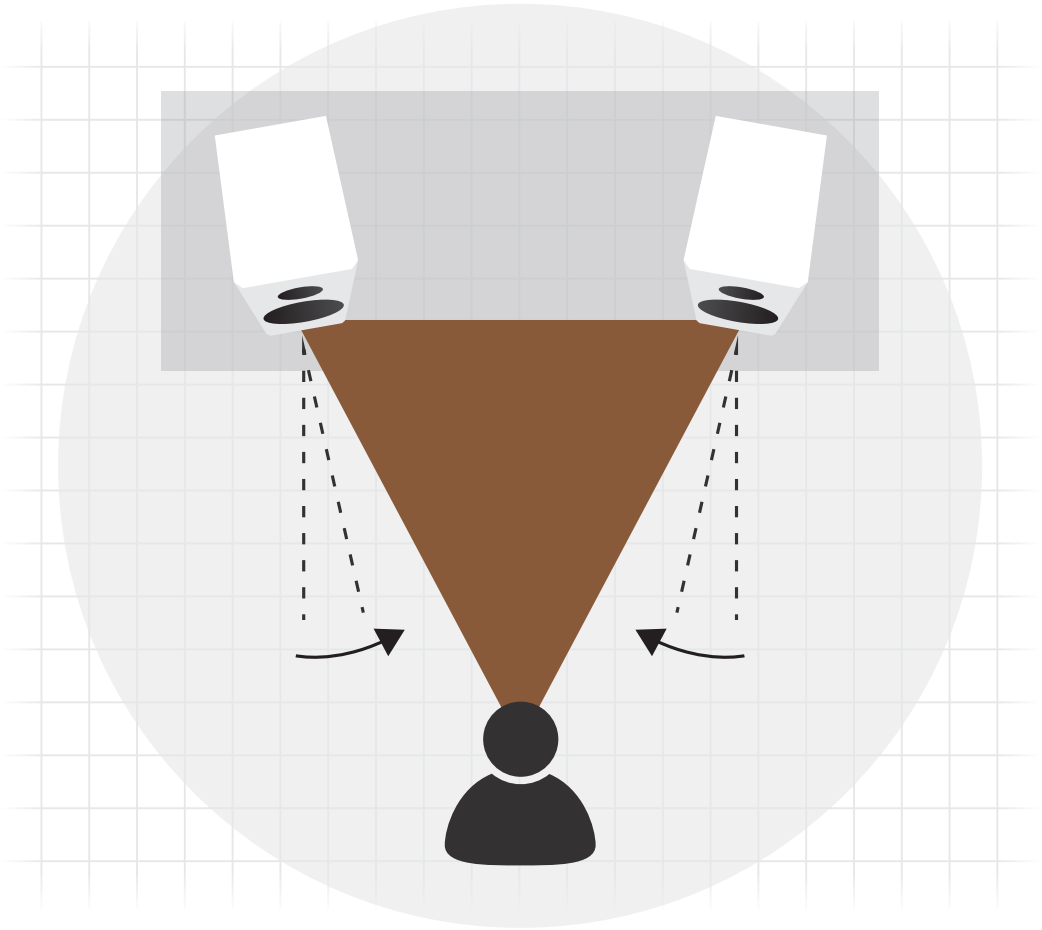

Figure 5: Angle inwards loudspeakers to improve imaging.

Loudspeaker Toe-In

Depending on your personal listening environment and room dimensions, the loudspeakers may be angled in towards the listening area to focus the sound radiation. This positioning will typically improve imaging and is especially recommended by Dynaudio (see Figure 5).

Room and furniture influence

The sound quality of any loudspeaker is influenced by the furniture, wall materials and other objects in the listening room. For example, large rooms without much furniture and many clean, hard wall surfaces can give a bright and diffuse sound with diverse echoing frequencies. A room with thick carpet, curtains and soft furniture surfaces will give a warmer, darker and less lively sound.

Grille

A cloth grille is included and can be affixed to the cabinet to help protect the drivers from dust and any other influences. The grille is acoustically optimised, but the highest sound quality levels will be attained without any grille covers in place during listening

To remove the grille, gently pull the grille straight out from the front.

To fit the grille, line up the grille and let it snap in place.

Multi-channel setup

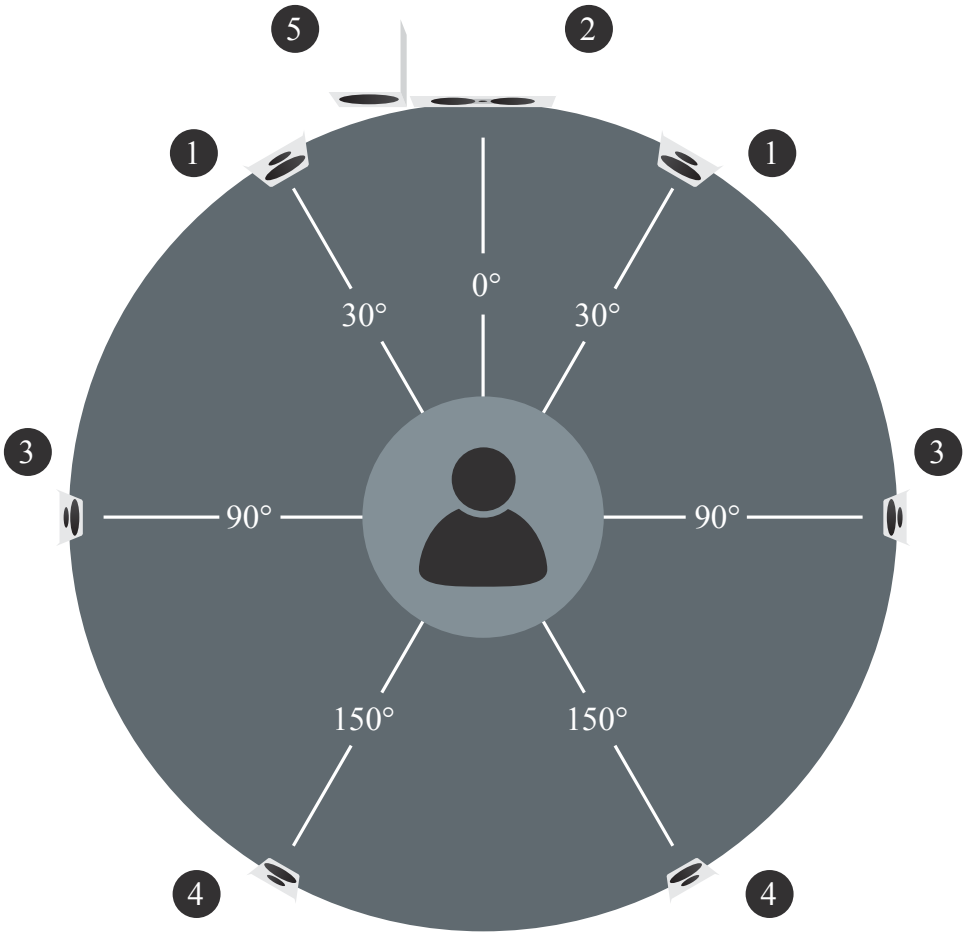

Figure 6: 5.1 and 7.1 multi-channel speaker setup.

Dynaudio loudspeakers are designed to offer the most advanced performance in both stereo and multi-channel applications. When connecting a loudspeaker to a multi-channel setup, in general the same guidelines as mentioned in the text above will apply.

Loudspeakers for multi-channel setups

For a multi-channel setup, in addition to the two main (stereo) loudspeakers, additional channels (speakers) may be added to reproduce dialogue and surround effects. With the centre channel and compact models, it is possible to achieve the same high level of performance and sound on every channel.

Centre speaker

The centre is responsible for the information directed from the middle of the screen and should be positioned between the right and left main loudspeakers.

In a home theatre/surround setup, the centre supports the images and should be placed close to the screen.

Side/Rear speakers

The side/rear speakers are responsible for the sound effects behind the listening position. When using the compact models as side/rear speakers, the speakers can be placed onto a shelf, mounted at the side/rear wall or placed on a stand. This allows you a wide variety of placements, even if your listening room and furniture limit an optimal setup.

Corresponding to the surround format 5.1 or 7.1, you need to install additional speakers:

- 5.1: The standard multi-channel setup with two side/surround speakers, preferably placed at the sides or slightly behind the listening position
- 7.1: Two rear speakers are added directly behind the listening position, typically on the back wall

Subwoofer

Most often a subwoofer will be utilised for the LFE-signal, especially in larger listening rooms. The position of the subwoofer will be dependent upon the size of the room and its acoustics. Please refer to the Subwoofer manual.

Multi-channel loudspeaker setup

Thus, a complete multi-channel setup consists of following speakers

- 1: Front (stereo) speakers
- 2: Centre speaker
- 3: Side/Surround speakers
- 4: Rear speakers (as explained above)
- 5: Subwoofer (possible position)

Because there are many differentsetup options – from 5.1 to 10.2 channel applications – and the factthat loudspeaker positioning will also depend upon the room's shape, please consult your Dynaudio dealer for special applications and for placement options.

Note

When setting up a home theatre system, the loudspeakers should create a realistic soundstage with similar sound characteristics on each channel. It is therefore important that all speakers should match the same quality level. This is especially important with regards to the centre channel loudspeaker, as this is a critical aspect of any multi-channel soundstage. Dynaudio has developed various models suitable for multi-channel applications: Compact and floor standing models with a matching centre channel, all optimised for use with Dynaudio active subwoofers and Dynaudio optional accessory products.

Running-in

Running-in the loudspeakers

The moving parts of a newly manufactured Dynaudio loudspeaker have been acoustically checked after production, but nevertheless are not as flexible as they need to be for optimum results to be realised. The higher the quality of any driver system, the more demanding the loudspeaker will be regarding time for running-in the system.

A newly unpacked Dynaudio loudspeaker therefore requires several weeks running/ playing to reach its optimum performance capability. After that period, a couple of minutes before every listening session will be helpful to “warm up” the loudspeakers.

Power rating

Due to the construction and the driver technology Dynaudio loudspeakers can be driven with very high power levels. With a high quality amplifier, delivering undistorted signals, the speaker can achieve high levels without any compromises in sound quality.

Attention must be given to amplifiers with very low power and adjustable tone controls or switches. These types may soon overreach their own performance limits and may send distorted output signals to the speakers, compromising even high quality technology.

Any damage caused under such circumstances is not covered by the Dynaudio warranty and is easily avoided in the first place by consulting your Dynaudio dealer for advice regarding the choice of amplifier.

Distorted output signals

CAUTION

Distorted output signals from too weak, defective or overloaded amplifiers may damage the loudspeakers.

Use high quality amplifiers only and run loudspeakers and amplifiers within specified power ratings.

Care and Maintenance

Dynaudio loudspeakers require no special treatment apart from the kind of careful handling you would normally apply to any high tech product in your home.

Aggressive cleaning fluids

CAUTION

All-in-one cleaning materials, aggressive cleaning fluids or special furniture polishes may damage the cabinet surface or other speaker parts.

Use a soft dry or slightly damp cloth when cleaning the cabinet and other plain parts.

Cleaning the loudspeakers

Switch off all components of your system when cleaning any of these components.

Avoid touching the tweeter domes as any change of their shape may have an impact on sound quality.

Clean the cabinet and other plain parts with a soft dry or slightly damp cloth only.

Remove dust on the woofer diaphragms with a fine furniture brush.

All materials used by Dynaudio are integrated with exceptional care. By taking care of your loudspeakers, you will preserve the finish and build quality for a very long time.

Warranty

Dynaudio provides a transferable limited manufacturer's warranty. This warranty only covers faults or defects in material and production. Damage caused as a result of abuse, misuse or defective electronics is not covered by the warranty.

All warranty claims must be accompanied by a copy of the original purchase invoice and warranties are only valid in the country or market of original origin or distribution. Should warranty service be required, it must be arranged for in the country of purchase by an authorised Dynaudio dealer.

All performance criteria are strictly controlled. In the whole production procedure – from raw materials to the final assembly – Dynaudio thoroughly inspects all parameters along every step of way.

Six ways to listen like the professionals

Want to know how pro engineers put loudspeakers through their paces in listening rooms? You can do it, too.

“Golden ears” are a myth. No one is born being able to pick out what makes one speaker better than another, to know when one component doesn’t work with another or to identify that obscure oboe passage that’s just about audible under the strings. It takes practice and attention. But, above all, it takes confidence. And the good news is, if you have that confidence you’re already well on the way to being able to listen like the professionals.

01: Pick music you know

Get rid of any preconceived notions about what you ‘should’ listen to on these speakers and play something you love. It doesn’t matter what – as long as you know it really well. These are your companions; so if you’re into cheesy 80s pop, forget trying to listen to demo CD-style jazz, just because that’s what they played in the shop.

02: It’s all in the detail

Try to identify key moments in the music you’re listening to. That might be a particular guitar intro, the way the bass interacts with the drums in a certain section, the ambience of the concert hall just before the orchestra strikes up, or a wash of effects over a vocal part. Listen to them over and over until you know exactly how they sound. Then compare them on different pieces of equipment – you might be surprised by how many differences you can hear.

03: Listen to the start of notes...

The crack of a snare drum. The ‘ting’ of a ride cymbal. The attack of a pick on a guitar string. That initial puff of a trumpet note. The start of a word in the vocal part. Can you hear them distinctly or do they seem to lag behind a little? Are they crisp and clear, or woolly and ill-defined?

If you’re listening to a piece of soft classical that sounds harsh and brittle on the new components, for example, or a well-produced rock song that no longer sounds as driving as you remember, it’s probably down to the equipment’s timing (how different frequencies interact with each other).

04: ... and the end

The tail of a note is just as important as its attack. Take the ride cymbal: how does it decay after the drummer hits it? Does it sound like a physical, metal, vibrating piece of drumkit? Or does it sound flat and listless? Does it ‘fit’ the music, or does it tail off too quickly? Try to listen for these longer parts; become aware of how individual instruments sound. It can be tricky at first to identify an individual part in the middle of a song, but persevere and you’ll become adept.

05: Take your time

Don’t play one track and judge the kit on a five-minute listen. First impressions do count, of course, but second ones matter more. And third ones. Immerse yourself in the music – just as you would at home. Close your eyes. Recline. Relax and just listen…

06: Go with your gut

Trust your instincts. If you think you can hear something, you probably can. This isn’t a magic trick – and it doesn’t need to be a stressful exercise in ‘critical’ listening. It’s about suddenly hearing details in your favourite music that you’d never picked out before – hearing it again, as if for the first time. And that is where the magic happens.

DYNAUDIO

Special Forty

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